



E&R Report No.08.26

February 2009

**ABCs AND AYP RESULTS,  
WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM: 2007-08**

(Revised October 2009, see page 6)

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**ABSTRACT**

*The North Carolina ABCs Accountability Model has two components: The performance composite and growth. Using those two components, each school is assigned into a recognition category and designated as having met Expected or High Growth. Under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) provision, a school meets Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) if all subgroups with 40 or more students reach pre-set targets in reading and mathematics, and if the school shows progress in its graduation or attendance rate. Eighty-six percent of Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) schools met Expected or High Growth in 2007-08. Sixty percent of WCPSS schools received the designation of School of Progress. Twenty-eight out of 153 schools (18%) met AYP.*

**BACKGROUND**

**ABCs**

The ABCs Accountability Model for elementary and middle schools was first implemented in the 1996-97 school year. The high school model was implemented in 1997-98. This model includes both a performance component, which evaluates the extent to which students score proficient on various tests in each school, and a growth component, which evaluates the extent to which students make progress from one year to the next.

The performance component of the model, which is measured by the Performance Composite, addresses the percentage of test scores at or above grade level (Levels III or IV), and it includes all students tested (including alternate assessments). Tests included in this calculation are, depending on the school's grade range: End-of-Grade (EOG) reading; EOG mathematics; grades 4, 7 or 10 writing; End-of-Course (EOC) tests for 10 core subjects; and computer skills.

The growth component deals with students' scores from one year to the next, and includes only students with both scores in the current year as well as the previous year's predictor(s) and who

attended the same school for 140 days or more. Growth calculations are based solely on EOG and/or EOC scores.

**ABCs Growth Standards**

The basic assumption of the ABCs growth component is that a student should be expected to do at least as well on various tests as she or he had done on prior tests compared to all other students who took the test in the standard-setting year. The standard-setting year is typically the first year in which a test becomes operational and in which students receive scores for the test. Under the growth component of the model, schools can be designated as not meeting growth, meeting “Expected Growth,” or meeting “High Growth.” Growth results are calculated for each student in each subject.

For each school, an average growth score is computed, combining the average of the individual growth on the current year’s tests for each student. For high schools, the change in number of students receiving a diploma for college, technical college, or university prep and the change in the school’s dropout rate are also included in the computations of the school growth score. The average growth across all of these indicators has to be greater than or equal to 0 for the school to meet the Expected Growth standard. In order to meet the High Growth standard, a school must first meet Expected Growth, and then at least 60% of the students in the school have to meet their individual growth targets on their tests. (It should be noted that in 2007-08, reading was not included in the computations for growth for elementary and middle schools because it was the first year of a new EOG test.) For high schools in 2007-08, the model included only five EOCs (Algebra I, Civics and Economics, English 1, Geometry and U.S. History); Therefore, comparisons across years should be taken with caution.

**School Recognitions**

In order to be designated with one of the labels the state confers upon schools, a school must both make at least the Expected Growth standard and have a certain percentage of its student test scores fall into the Level III or Level IV range. Table 1 provides the definitions for each of the recognition categories the state applies to schools under this accountability program.

**Table 1  
Definition of ABCs Awards and Recognition Categories, 2007-08**

Schools making <i>High Growth</i> attained their High Growth standard. Certified staff members each receive a bonus of up to \$1,500, and teacher assistants up to \$500.
Schools making <i>Expected Growth</i> attained their Expected Growth standard (but not their High Growth standard). Certified staff members each receive up to \$750 and teacher assistants up to \$375.
<i>Honor Schools of Excellence</i> are schools that made at least Expected Growth, had at least 90% of their students’ scores at or above Level III, and made Adequate Yearly Progress (see the AYP section of this document for further details).

<i>Schools of Excellence</i> are schools that made at least Expected Growth and had at least 90% of their students' scores at or above Level III but did not make AYP (see the AYP section of this document for further details).
<i>Schools of Distinction</i> are schools that made at least Expected Growth and had 80-89% of their students' scores at or above Level III.
<i>Schools of Progress</i> are schools that made at least Expected Growth and had 60-79% of their students' scores at or above Level III.
Schools receiving <i>No Recognition</i> did not make their Expected Growth standards but have at least 60% of their students' scores at or above Level III.
<i>Priority Schools</i> are schools that have less than 60% of their students' scores at or above Achievement Level III, irrespective of making their Expected Growth standards, and are not Low-Performing Schools.
<i>Low-Performing Schools</i> are those that failed to meet their Expected Growth standards and have less than 50% of their students' scores at or above Level III.

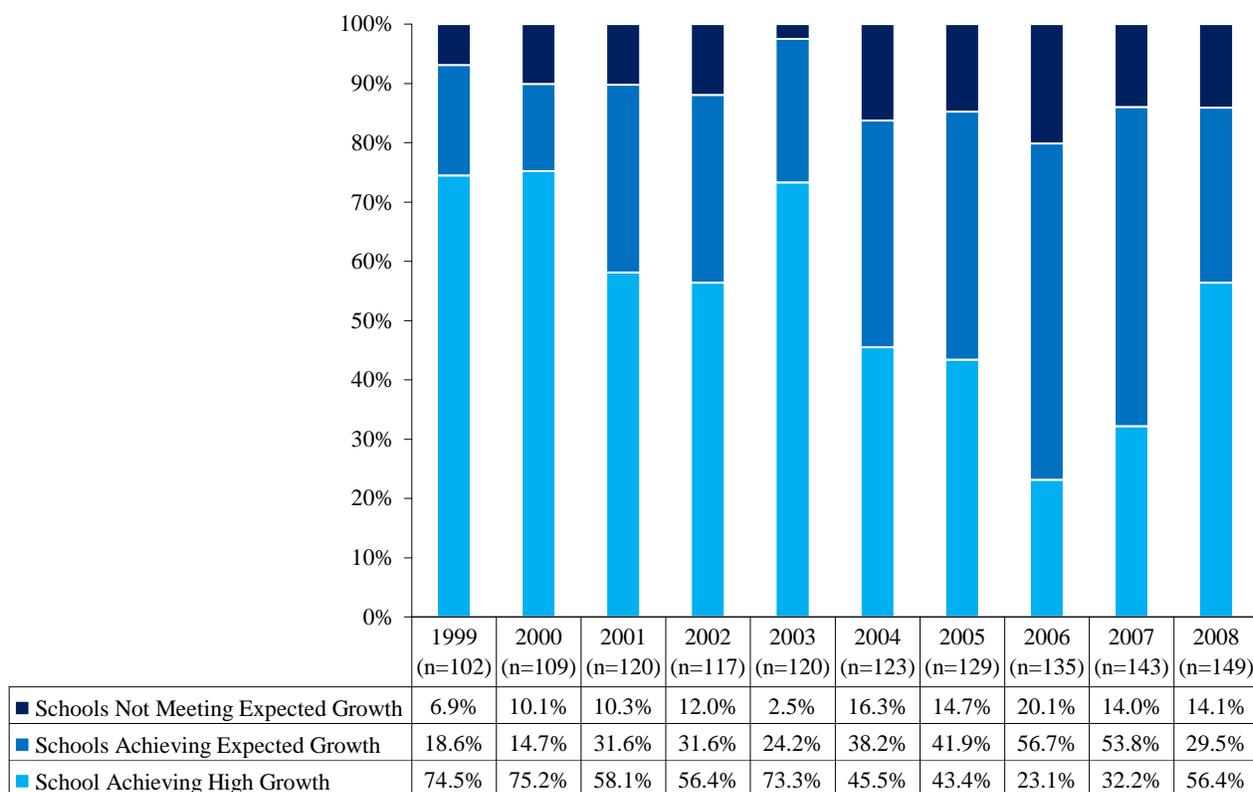
Note: Adapted from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/abc/2007-08/execsumm.html>.

Alternative schools follow a slightly different model, which includes the choice of five objectives for the school to reach during the school year: Two components are based on state tests, and the remaining three are chosen from among a list established by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The recognition categories for alternative schools are defined as follows: If the five objectives are met, the school is said to have met High Growth. If three or four objectives are met, the school is said to have met Expected Growth. If two objectives are met, the school is labeled as No Recognition. If the school met only one or none of its objectives, it is labeled as a Low-Performing School. There are three alternative schools in WCPSS (River Oaks Middle, Mount Vernon, and Phillips High). Finally, special education schools are not included in the state ABCs model. There is one special education school in Wake County (Longview). Those four schools were therefore not included in the analyses that are presented here.

**Results**

Most WCPSS schools have met Expected or High Growth standards every year the ABCs model has been in effect. In 2007-08, 86% of WCPSS schools met Expected or High Growth (Figure 1). However the percentages of schools meeting Expected Growth or High Growth in 2007-08 were effectively reversed from those of 2006-07, with 56% of schools meeting High Growth (32% in 2006-07) and 30% of schools meeting Expected Growth (54% in 2006-07). These results were very similar to the results for the state, where 55% of schools met High Growth and 27% met Expected Growth in 2007-08.

**Figure 1**  
**WCPSS ABCs Growth Summary over Time, 1999-2008**

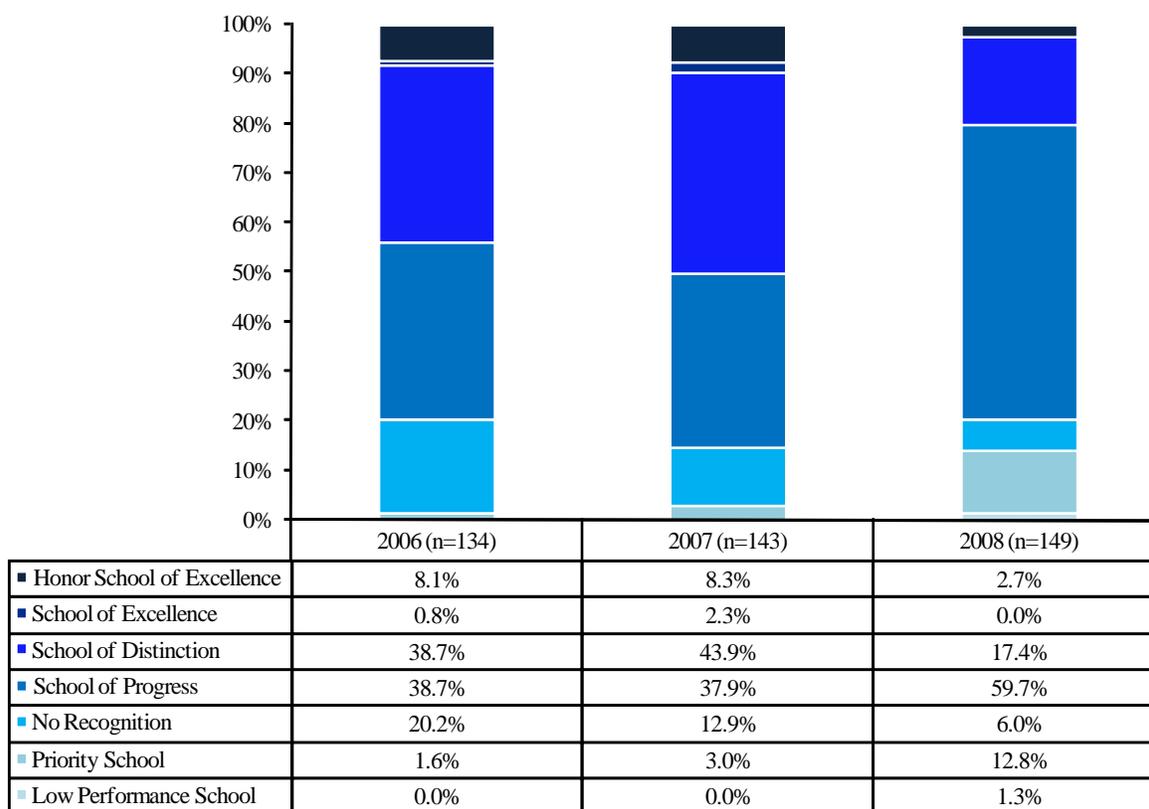


Interpretation Example: In 2008, 56.4% of WCPSS schools met High Growth, 29.5% met Expected Growth and 14.1% did not meet Expected Growth.

In 2007-08, 60% of WCPSS schools were designated as Schools of Progress (Figure 2). The second most frequent recognition was School of Distinction (17%). The proportion of schools designated as School of Distinction decreased by more than half from 2007-08, due in part to the introduction of new more rigorous assessments for EOG Reading, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Physical Science. For the first time in several years, there were two WCPSS schools designated as Low-Performing schools. The percentage of schools receiving the highest recognition, Honor School of Excellence, decreased from 8% in the two previous years to 3% in 2007-08, which represents four schools (Davis Drive Elementary, Highcroft Elementary, Salem Middle, and Green Hope High School).

WCPSS had a greater proportion of schools in the higher recognition categories than the state. Eighty percent of WCPSS schools were in the recognition categories School of Progress, Schools of Distinction, School of Excellence, or Honor School of Excellence, while 55% of the schools in the state received those recognitions. Only about 10% of the state’s schools received the recognition School of Distinction or better (20% in WCPSS), and 29% were designated as Priority School (meaning having less than 60% of their students’ scores at or above Level III). In comparison, thirteen percent of WCPSS were designated as Priority Schools.

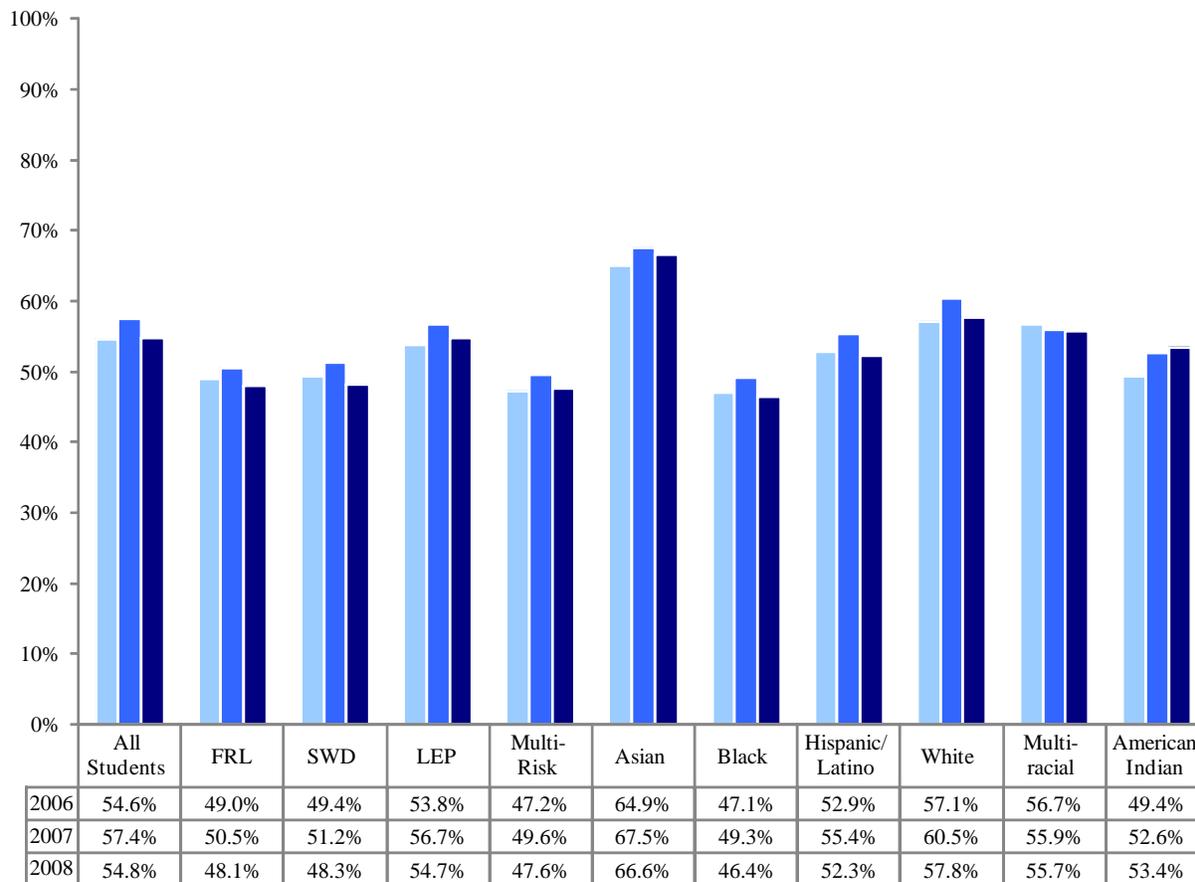
**Figure 2**  
**Percentages of WCPSS Schools by ABCs Designation, 2006-2008**



**ABCs Growth by Subject**

Asian students have been the most successful in meeting their growth targets in the past three years (Figure 3). Rates for White, limited English proficient (LEP) and Multiracial students have been very close to 60%, which is the percentage of students who need to meet their growth targets for the subgroup to meet High Growth; while Black/African American students, students receiving free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), students with disabilities (SWD) and students with multiple academic risks (i.e., at least two of FRL, SWD or LEP) were all below 50% in terms of meeting their growth targets.

**Figure 3**  
**Percentages of Students Meeting Growth Targets, by Subgroup,**  
**2006-2008\***



Note: Multi-risk students have two or more of the following characteristics: FRL, SWD, and/or LEP

**AYP**

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a series of targets that schools, school districts, and states must meet each year to fulfill the requirements of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also referred to as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, or NCLB). The ultimate goal is for 100% of students to score proficient in reading and mathematics by 2013-14.

In North Carolina, the primary measures used are EOG tests for grades 3-8 and selected EOC tests for high schools. High school measurements are based on Algebra I (for mathematics) and a combination of English I EOC tests and the 10<sup>th</sup>-grade Writing Test (for reading). The 10<sup>th</sup>-grade High School Comprehensive Test is also used for a small number of students who have not taken an Algebra I and/or English I course.

\*Figure revised October 5, 2009 to reflect corrected percentages for all years and sub-groups.

Each school may have up to 10 student subgroups that must meet the prescribed targets in both reading and mathematics. The 10 subgroups are: school as a whole, American Indian, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Multiracial, White, economically disadvantaged (defined as FRL), LEP students, and SWD students.

The achievement of these targets is measured by the percentage of students who take certain tests, as well as the percentage of students who pass those tests. Proficiency targets are set to increase incrementally every three years, until all targets become 100% in 2013-14. In order for a school to be designated as achieving AYP, all subgroups of students must have met the following targets:

- 95% participation rate in the school's appropriate reading assessment,
- 95% participation rate in the school's appropriate mathematics assessment,
- Proficiency target in reading (43.2% in grades 3-8; 38.5% in grade 10), and
- Proficiency target in mathematics (77.2% in grades 3-8; 68.4% in grade 10).

In addition to the four participation and performance targets for each subgroup, the school as a whole must also show progress on another "academic indicator." Schools that have 12<sup>th</sup> graders use the graduation rate, while all other schools use attendance rate.

Thus, a school could potentially have as many as 41 targets. A school must meet all its targets in order to meet AYP. If a school misses even one of their targets, the school fails to make AYP. Whether a school makes AYP influences its eligibility to be designated an Honor School of Excellence (see the ABCs section of this report for further details). Also, for schools that receive certain federal funding under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, failing to make AYP for multiple consecutive years can result in mandatory interventions such as supplementary tutoring, offering students the option to transfer to other schools, or even reconstituting the school with new staff in more extreme cases. In WCPSS, only elementary schools receive Title I funds at this time.

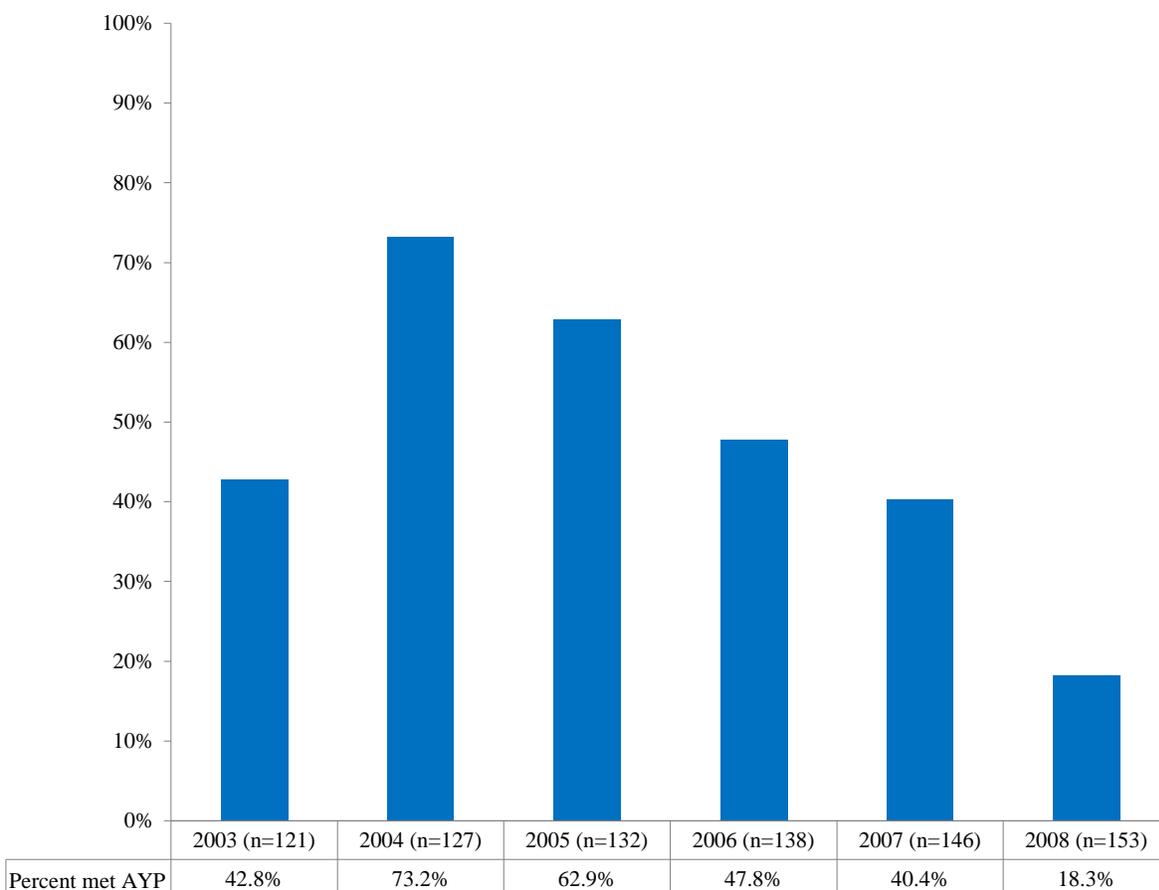
For AYP proficiency rates at the school level, schools are responsible for the performance of any subgroup for which there are at least 40 students in grades 3-8 or grade 10 who have been in membership for a full academic year (a full academic year is defined by the state as 140 of the 180 possible days in membership during the school year). AYP subgroups with a minimum of 40 students enrolled on the first day of testing (regardless of how many of those students meet the membership requirement) must also meet the "95% tested" requirement for both reading and mathematics assessments.

The changes in mathematics test standards made AYP more difficult to reach starting in 2005-06. In 2007-08, the reading standards changed as well, adding to the difficulty. DPI made adjustments to the targets to partially compensate for the change in standards, as each time a new standard is introduced, the percentage of student scoring at or above Level III decreases.

**Results**

In 2007-08, 28 WCPSS schools (18.3%) made AYP, a lower rate than the 40.4% success rate in 2006-07, (see figure 4). The percentage of schools making AYP has decreased since 2005-06 as new standards were introduced in both mathematics and reading. Because of the “all or nothing” nature of NCLB, if schools miss only one of their targets, they do not make AYP. In WCPSS, in 2007-08, 24 schools (16% of total) missed AYP by only one target, 23 schools missed by two targets, and 100 (66%) schools missed five or fewer targets.

**Figure 4  
WCPSS Schools Making Adequate Yearly Progress, 2003-2008**

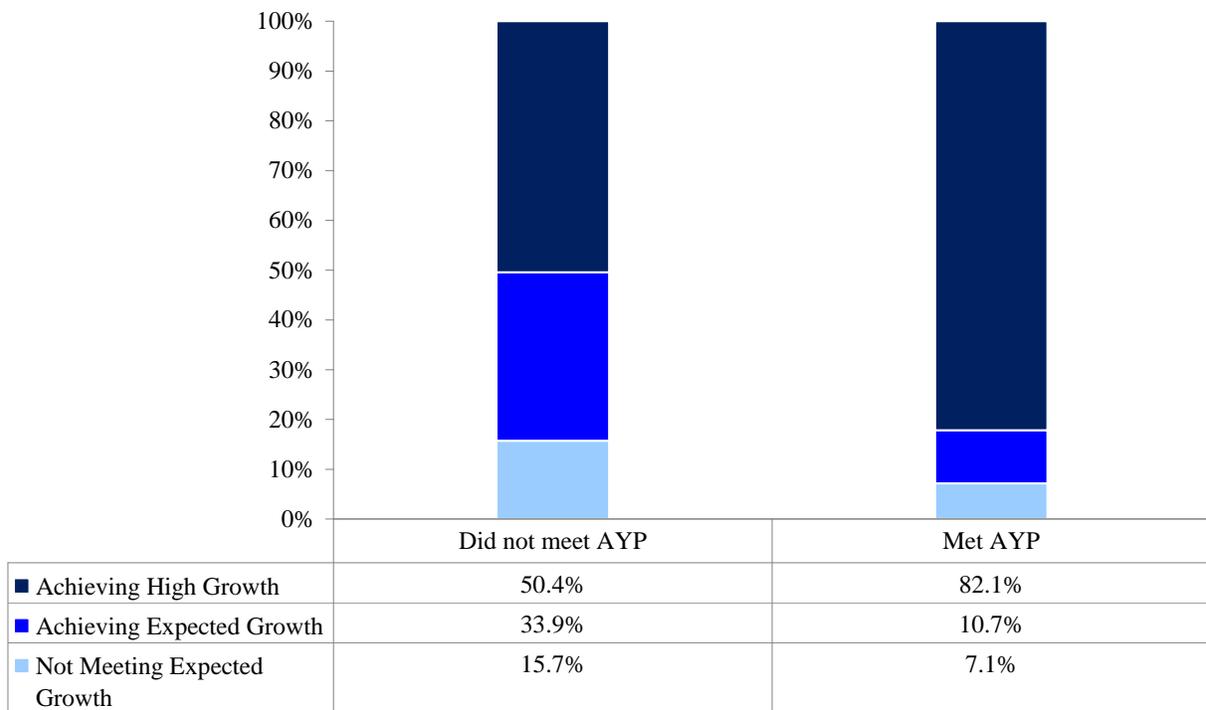


As described above, schools have to meet four targets per available subgroup and the other academic indicator in order to make AYP. This represents a possible maximum number of 41 targets per school, if all subgroups are represented. The range of the number of targets among WCPSS was from two (one school) to 37 (eight schools). The most common number of targets was in the 21-25 range (43% of schools). Seventeen percent of schools had between 16 and 20 targets, and 15% between 26 and 30.

Eighty-five percent of WCPSS schools missed at least one target in mathematics, and 54% percent missed at least one target in reading. The three subgroups that missed the most targets across all schools were the SWD (124), FRL (121) and Black/African American (98) subgroups.

The NCLB Act of 2001 emphasizes the performance of all subgroups, by using the percentages of students who are above a certain threshold. In contrast, the ABCs growth model emphasizes students' progress, no matter where they started. In order to illustrate the relationship between the two measures, the combination of whether a school met AYP and achieved at least Expected Growth was studied. As can be seen in Figure 5, the proportion of schools that met expected or High Growth was 84.3% for the schools that did not meet AYP and 92.8% for the schools that met AYP. There were a greater proportion of schools that met High Growth among the schools that met AYP (82.1%) than among those that did not meet AYP (50.4%). Therefore, many schools that did not make AYP met the ABCs growth standards in 2007-08, and a smaller number of schools failed to meet their growth standards, but still made AYP.

**Figure 5**  
**WCPSS Schools: ABCs Growth and Adequate Yearly Progress 2007-08**



## SUMMARY

Eighty-six percent of WCPSS schools met at least Expected Growth in 2007-08. Eighty percent of the schools received the recognition of School of Progress or higher, which means that 60-79% of their students' test scores were at or above grade level. Eighteen percent of the schools in WCPSS met AYP. The drop in the percentage making AYP and in the percentage of schools in the higher ABCs recognition categories has coincided with the introduction of more rigorous assessments with lower passing rates. Growth results are largely unaffected by changes in test standards, and have therefore remained more stable, with 80% or more of WCPSS schools meeting at least Expected Growth over the past decade.

Meeting grade-level standards (e.g., AYP) and making year-to-year progress (growth) are the two linchpins of our test-based accountability system. As schools strive to meet both challenges, the AYP proficiency component is becoming more elusive. Passing thresholds on state tests continue to become more rigorous, while the target proficiency levels of AYP must by necessity rise toward the 100% required by 2013-14. WCPSS schools must continue to focus their efforts on meeting both goals of the state's accountability system by helping all students to meet higher standards and to achieve their growth potential across the entire achievement spectrum. WCPSS also must concentrate its efforts on the subgroups who struggle the most. The SWD, FRL, and Black/African American subgroups were the three subgroups that had the lowest percentages of students meeting their growth expectations and where schools missed the most of their AYP targets.